

# Follow-up Evaluation: Three Latin American Cohorts in the Virtual Leadership Development Program

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Nancy Vollmer LeMay  
M&L Monitoring and Evaluation Unit

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Management and Leadership Program  
Management Sciences for Health  
Boston, MA 02130  
Telephone: (617) 524 7766  
[www.msh.org/mandl](http://www.msh.org/mandl)

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## Executive Summary

The Virtual Leadership Development Program (VLDP) is a 12-week blended learning program that provides practical leadership training for teams linked to real organizational challenges selected by participants. The VLDP was first launched in October 2002 and to date it has been delivered four times in Latin America, twice in Africa, and once each in the Caribbean and Brazil. This follow-up evaluation focuses on the initial three Latin American cohorts, which included a total of 35 teams from public sector and non-governmental and private voluntary organizations.

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the medium-term outcomes of the VLDP associated with workgroup climate and teams' progress in the implementation of organizational action plans following the completion of the initial three VLDP courses in Latin America, consistent with the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan developed for the VLDP. The evaluation is intended to contribute to knowledge gained previously through an evaluation of the first VLDP in 2003 and the After Action Review sessions conducted by the MSH VLDP team after each program delivery. A qualitative methodology was used including telephone interviews, email questionnaires, review of data captured on the VLDP Web site and review of documents.

The main results of the evaluation include:

- The VLDP is an innovative and cost effective way of training large numbers of managers and staff members. The initial three VLDPs in Latin America reached a total of 282 participants from 35 teams belonging to 24 organizations in 8 countries over a period of 15 months (October 2002 to December 2003).
- The 21 teams reviewed in this report showed mixed results in implementing their action plans. Most teams had begun to implement their plans and have made progress in implementing various activities. Twelve teams either had never implemented their plans or had abandoned them after carrying out a few activities. Teams from VLDP1 and VLDP3 showed greater progress in addressing their challenges than those from VLDP2.
- Five teams had fully addressed their challenge and four were still addressing their challenge. Two of the most important characteristics common to the five teams were that they were intact functioning teams, staff who normally work together, and their action plans involved concrete and measurable challenges focused on an organizational system or process. Teams that abandoned or never began to implement their plan were more likely to be non-intact teams that had chosen a communication or teambuilding challenge.
- The main factors that affected the ability of teams to address their challenge include:
  - The composition of the team
  - The type of challenge selected
  - The action plan itself, particularly whether activities in the plan will lead to addressing the challenge and achieving the desired performance
  - Integration (or lack thereof) of the content of the action plan into an existing or new annual operational plan. In three cases, the integration of the action plan into the organization's annual operational plan or strategic planning contributed to the teams' ability to achieve results. Integration guarantees continued monitoring, follow-up and funding for activities in the plan.

- The availability of time to devote to regular team meetings to monitor or follow-up on action plans once the VLDP course had ended
- Support (or lack thereof) of the organizational directors/executives for the team or the selected challenge
- A variety of reasons explain why some teams encountered difficulty in fully addressing their challenges and implementing their action plans. These include:
  - The disintegration of the team following the end of the course (due to staff changes, Ministry of Health politics, or team members returning to their “real” operational teams after the course)
  - The lack of authority of the team within the organizational structure to implement its action plan
  - Lack of funds or other resources
  - Lack of support from senior management within the organization
  - Change in leadership within the organization
  - Low priority among competing demands for staff time
- Action plans produced during VLDP3 were generally of higher quality than those from VLDP1 and VLDP2. Teams initiate action planning in Module 3, which was lengthened beginning in VLDP3. Also, VLDP facilitators focused increased attention on this module, and review and feedback on the action plans by the M&L Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Unit was initiated in VLDP3.
- The VLDP affects the team and the organization beyond the implementation of the action plan. Basing the assessment of organizational outcomes primarily on action plan results is a narrow and potentially misleading basis for measuring the results of the VLDP that may miss other important changes that occur as a result of the course. Participants’ opinions of the utility of the course are overwhelmingly positive across the three courses. They point to the value of building effective teams and changing the manager’s behavior which can affect the organization beyond the results of a single action plan. Strengthened teams should be considered a viable outcome measure for the VLDP in future evaluations.
- Participation in the VLDP contributes to the strengthening of existing, intact teams with an improved capacity to focus on their challenges, share common goals, communicate openly, plan, participate, and appreciate the contributions of others. This change rarely occurs with non-intact teams made up of groups of staff or colleagues brought together solely to participate in the course. It therefore appears that strengthened teams may be an unstated outcome of the course that can be measured qualitatively and that is partially indicative of improved work group climate.
- A characteristic common to both intact and non-intact teams was the desire to share the course content with other staff members who had not participated. This was especially true among participants from non-intact teams that were returning to work with their regular unit or workgroup after the course. Course replication, either formal or informal, was seen as a necessary strategy to pave the way for implementing their action plans by bringing others on board with the concepts and to enhance the effect of the course beyond the team that had participated.

The main findings concerning the design and implementation of the VLDP include:

- The course was delivered in Latin America to multiple organizations at a time as well as multiple teams within a single institution which indicates the versatility and adaptability of the program to client needs. The facilitators for all three VLDP courses were physically located in Mexico, illustrating the feasibility of using the internet for distance learning within Latin America.
- Applying MSH's Workgroup Climate Assessment (WCA) tool and analyzing the results appears to be a useful initial exercise for teams entering the course, and one which kindles a great deal of discussion and self analysis among participants. However, it is not clear what purpose the WCA served in the VLDP training design because the data and its interpretation were not used as a training or program strategy in VLDP 2, when the WCA was first introduced, or in VLDP 3. The course did not lead teams to recognize strengths and weaknesses that affect their climate, nor did it ask teams to strategize ways to address deficiencies as they made their way through the course. It should be noted that deficiencies in the use of the WCA have been addressed in subsequent offerings of the VLDPs.
- The experience with both structured and non-structured coaching for VLDP teams after course completion showed that both approaches suffered from low enrollment and poor participation levels. Of the 30 teams eligible for coaching, a total of 15 teams enrolled in a coaching period. Of these, nine teams completed coaching but only two fulfilled the basic requirements, being submission of a revised action plan. Regardless of the format used, it was difficult to motivate teams to meet together again after the course due to demands and other time constraints, limited or no progress in action plan implementation, or disintegration of the team. It is unlikely that virtual follow-up in any form can overcome these barriers, however some form of post-course support and coaching are needed. Telephone interviews conducted for this follow-up evaluation were seen by some teams as motivational and served as a form of follow-up support.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are offered. The recommendations are organized by those relating to VLDP design and implementation, and those related to future evaluations:

VLDP design and implementation:

1. M&L and the VLDP team should reexamine existing expectations for course outcomes, especially the function and importance of teams' progress in implementing their action plans as a key indicator of results and impact of the VLDP.
2. The VLDP team should consistently apply existing procedures for participant application to the VLDP to assure that intact or currently functioning teams, as opposed to non-intact teams who normally do not work together, enroll in the course.
3. M&L should explore the use of current follow-up mechanisms (e.g. LeaderNet) in the event that non-intact teams enroll in the VLDP in future in order to provide support to those teams that disintegrate after the course, while realizing that this recommendation is challenging in view of funding available to M&L.
4. M&L and its LeaderNet program should analyze how to better support teams after the course and whether coaching should revolve around the action plan.

5. The VLDP team should continue to communicate course requirements and expectations prior to the course.
6. The VLDP team should continue to address the role and purpose of the WCA within the program.
7. The VLDP team should consider the feasibility, merits, and utility of providing materials for course replication by participants within an organization.
8. The VLDP team should consider developing an additional module focused solely on planning techniques for participants.
9. The VLDP team should continue to carry out the After Action Review of each VLDP in order to identify immediate programmatic modifications in the course design and implementation strategy. M&L should assure that adequate funding is available for any needed modifications.

#### Evaluation of future VLDPs:

1. The M&E Unit and the VLDP team should discuss the optimum timing of future VLDP follow-up evaluations for the documentation of medium-term outcomes. The timing should ensure adequate respondent recall and yet allow sufficient time for teams to make progress in implementing their action plans and applying their new leadership competencies and skills.
2. The M&E Unit and the VLDP team should develop an outcome indicator that measures evidence of team strengthening as a result of participation in the VLDP and any follow-on activities undertaken by teams.
2. The M&E Unit and VLDP team should determine a more effective way than phone interviews to document results of the VLDP. Facilitators should notify participants that they will be contacted following the course. The feasibility on online questionnaires should be explored.
3. M&L needs to ensure that population and non-population funding is available for future follow-up evaluations of the VLDP.

## 1. Background

The Virtual Leadership Development Program (VLDP) is a 12-week blended-learning program developed by the Management and Leadership (M&L) Program of Management Sciences for Health that provides practical leadership training linked to organizational challenges selected by participants. Participants from public sector, non-governmental and private voluntary organizations enroll in the program as teams which range in number from four to 10 members. The program combines internet-based facilitation, course material and individual exercises with on-site (face-to-face) team meetings for reflection and shared learning. Two of the VLDP's Web site features, the Café and the Forum, provide mechanisms for reflection and shared learning between the teams.

The VLDP was first launched in Spanish in October 2002 for 81 participants from 12 organizations in Latin America. The course was then evaluated, refined and delivered a second time for 110 participants from five organizations beginning March 2003. A third delivery for 91 participants from seven organizations started in September 2003. In total, 35 teams participated in the three courses from 24 organizations in eight Latin American countries. Delivery of the three VLDP programs was supported with funding provided by the Office of Population/Reproductive Health of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The delivery and immediate results of the three courses have already been reviewed and analyzed in-depth. Immediately following the completion of the first VLDP, the M&L Monitoring and Evaluation Unit conducted an evaluation of the course to assess the development of the virtual program, its content, methodology, challenges, successes and immediate outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Recommendations from this first evaluation and the VLDP team's After Action Review were incorporated into the content and delivery of the subsequent VLDP courses in Spanish. The VLDP team has since conducted After Action Reviews after each VLDP course and has used this information to further refine the course delivery and follow-up mechanisms.

The purpose of the current evaluation is to assess the medium-term outcomes of the VLDP associated with workgroup climate<sup>2</sup> and teams' progress in the implementation of organizational action plans following the completion of three VLDP courses, consistent with the M&E Plan developed for the VLDP. It is part of a series of M&L evaluations on the subject of *Developing Managers Who Lead* and responds to a common set of key questions intended to provide substantive learning for the VLDP program team and M&L's wider knowledge management activities.

This evaluation took place in two stages with follow-up to teams from the first and second VLDP course in January – February 2004. Due to low participation rates in the follow-up interviews, a second attempt to reach VLDP2 teams was made in May – June 2004. Follow-up to VLDP3 teams was originally scheduled for April – May 2004 and postponed to August 2004 to allow for

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<sup>1</sup> C. Perry, N. LeMay, and F. Nauseda. *Evaluation of the Virtual Leadership Development Program (VLDP): First Program Delivery in Spanish*, June 2003, MSH. A summary Evaluation Note may be downloaded from the M&L Web site at: [http://www.msh.org/projects/mandl/pdf/EvalNotes/VLDP\\_Evaluation\\_Notes.pdf](http://www.msh.org/projects/mandl/pdf/EvalNotes/VLDP_Evaluation_Notes.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> M&L defines Workgroup Climate as the prevailing workplace atmosphere as experienced by employees. According to the M&L Results Framework, workgroup climate is a primary outcome of a leadership development process aimed at improving the performance of managers and their workgroups. Workgroup climate is measured according to the perceptions of the workgroup members. The Workgroup Climate Assessment (WCA) is a 12-item, self-scoring questionnaire developed by M&L to measure climate among intact teams or workgroups in the health sector. Annex 5 provides the 12 climate assessment items.

the completion of two coaching modules offered to VLDP3 teams which concluded in late July 2004. As a result, follow-up to VLDP3 teams occurred 7-8 months after the completion of the third VLDP course and almost immediately following the virtual coaching for VLDP3.

The **objectives** of the evaluation were to:

- Assess the extent to which VLDP teams have addressed their selected organizational challenges and achieved the organizational performance objectives related to their action plans
- Identify elements of the program content, delivery and follow-up support that are associated with organizational outcomes achieved by the VLDP teams
- Assess the extent to which leadership skills, team building processes and workgroup climate levels have been sustained among the VLDP participants and teams
- Formulate recommendations for M&L and the VLDP management team on the best strategies and approaches to enhance the impact of the program among participating teams/organizations

## **2. Overview of VLDP Course Design**

The VLDP uses a blended learning<sup>3</sup> approach to deliver seven learning modules to participating teams. The course was originally delivered over an 11 week period which was then extended to 12 weeks to allow participants more time to complete the third module. The modules include an introductory module, five leadership development modules, and a closing module. The leadership modules cover the following topics:

- Introduction to Leadership in Health Institutions: Explains the importance of leadership in the health sector and the difference between management and leadership; introduces the M&L results framework; participants complete the Workgroup Climate Assessment (introduced in VLDP2).
- Facing Leadership Challenges: Introduces the Performance Improvement (PI) model which teams use to select an institutional challenge they will work on during and after the course. Teams describe actual and desired performance related to the challenge and examine root causes for the gap. Based on this analysis, they prepare and submit an action plan to address the challenge.
- Competencies in Leadership: Discusses leadership competencies needed by managers who lead and the role of values in leadership; participants apply the Leadership Assessment Inventory, a self assessment tool developed by Linkages Inc.
- Communication: Presents communication as a leadership competency; participants assess their individual communication and motivational styles, identify the mix of styles within their team and determine how this can affect their ability to achieve results.
- Change Management: Introduces Kotter's eight steps for organizational change<sup>4</sup>; teams review and revise their action plans to take into account the eight steps for change management.

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<sup>3</sup> Blended learning combines traditional face-to-face training methods with distance learning mechanisms such as internet, email, phone, CD-ROM and workbooks.

<sup>4</sup> Kotter, J. P. 1996, Leading Change, Harvard Business School, Massachusetts.



During each module, participants carry out individual work on the VLDP website (reading module content, case studies, and editorials, completing module exercises, and participating in discussions in the Café<sup>5</sup>) and then participate in face-to-face group meetings with their other team members to discuss what has occurred in the module and conduct assigned group work. At the conclusion of each module, a coordinator from each team responds to questions regarding their group work in a Forum<sup>6</sup> discussion. As additional support, all participants receive a printed workbook and CD-ROM containing the course content.

Two experienced MSH facilitators provide virtual facilitation and coaching via email and postings on the Web site. Their responsibilities include launching each course module, posting daily announcements and messages to encourage participants to reflect on their learning, receiving and responding to participant questions and comments, stimulating discussion on the site's Café and Forum, and providing feedback on the completion and content of individual and group exercises, including feedback on action plans. For all three VLDP programs, the facilitators were physically located in Mexico which illustrates the versatility of a web-based program and the possibility of effectively using the internet for training in Latin America.

To further support the implementation of action plans, VLDP facilitators have offered virtual coaching and follow-up to participating teams following the conclusion of each VLDP. Coaching for the teams from the first two VLDPs was fairly unstructured and relied on email and phone contact between the facilitators and participating teams. For VLDP3 teams, coaching was offered through two structured modules that followed a similar format to that used during the course. The modules covered "Focused perseverance and strategic thinking" and "Systems analysis and problem solving."

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Description of Study Timeline and Respondents**

A total of 35 teams completed the three VLDP courses. Five teams were excluded from the sample selection: three MSH teams, the PAHO team and the VLDP facilitator team. Of the remaining 30 teams, 23 were selected as a purposive sample for interviews based on their participation in one of the coaching periods. These included all nine teams that completed coaching, all six teams that did not complete coaching and eight of the 15 teams that did not enroll in coaching.

Follow-up interviews were conducted with teams from VLDP1 and VLDP2 in January – February 2004. Due to low participation rates during this follow-up period, especially among VLDP2 teams, a second attempt was made in May – June 2004 to interview these teams. Follow-up interviews with VLDP3 teams were conducted in August 2004 to allow for the completion of two coaching modules offered to VLDP3 teams which concluded in late July 2004. The timeline of activities is displayed below.

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<sup>5</sup> The Café is a key element of the VLDP Web site where participants can post comments and questions in a "threaded" discussion format that encourages interaction between participants.

<sup>6</sup> The Forum is another element on the VLDP Web site where team coordinators for each module post the team's comments about the homework assignment for that module.

Activity	2002			2003												2004							
	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A
<i>VLDP1 Course</i>																							
<i>VLDP1 Coaching</i>																							
<i>Follow-up interviews</i>																							
<i>VLDP2 Course</i>																							
<i>VLDP1 &amp; 2 Coaching</i>																							
<i>Follow-up interviews</i>																							
<i>VLDP3 Course</i>																							
<i>VLDP3 Coaching</i>																							
<i>Follow-up interviews</i>																							

During the first follow-up period for VLDP1 and VLDP2 teams, the evaluator randomly selected participants to represent their teams in a telephone interview and contacted each by email to invite their participation. This approach yielded a very low response rate (nine interviews in total) and was abandoned during subsequent follow-up periods. Instead, during the May – June and August 2004 follow-up periods for VLDP2 and VLDP3 teams, representatives from each team were pre-selected and contacted by the facilitators (by both email and phone) to invite their participation in the telephone interview. They were each sent a copy of their action plan and a short email questionnaire (see annex 2) in case they preferred to respond by email. This approach produced only a few additional interviews with VLDP2 teams but worked well with VLDP3 teams.

As a result of the three follow-up periods, telephone interviews were completed with one participant representative from 19 teams (see table below) and five teams responded by email, of whom three also participated in an interview. In total, information was collected from 21 teams. No response was received from the other two teams in the sample or from additional teams selected as alternates to replace the two that did not respond.

**Table 1. Teams Responding to VLDP Follow-up Evaluation**

VLDP1 (6 teams)	VLDP2 (8 teams)	VLDP3 (7 teams)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NicaSalud, Nicaragua</li> <li>MaxSalud, Peru</li> <li>CIES, Bolivia</li> <li>State Secretariat of Health, Veracruz, Mexico</li> <li>PROSALUD Bolivia</li> <li>Ashonplafa**</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MOH Nicaragua Primary Health Care</li> <li>MOH Nicaragua Human Resources</li> <li>CRS Nicaragua</li> <li>CRS Ecuador *</li> <li>SS Veracruz Primary Health Care, Mexico</li> <li>Ashonplafa San Pedro Sula, Honduras</li> <li>PMSS II Hospital San Juan de Dios, Guatemala</li> <li>PMSS II Central level, Guatemala**</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEMOPLAF, Ecuador *</li> <li>MEXFAM, Mexico</li> <li>CRS Guatemala</li> <li>Save the Children Oruro, Bolivia</li> <li>CSRA la Paz, Bolivia</li> <li>CSRA Montero, Bolivia *</li> <li>PROCOSI, Bolivia</li> </ul>

\*Responses received by telephone interview and email      \*\*Responses received only by email

The teams that did not respond were among those that did not participate in any of the coaching periods. These teams were the most difficult to track down for interviews probably because they have had little to no contact with MSH since the end of their courses in December 2002 (VLDP1), June 2003 (VLDP2) or December 2003 (VLDP3). Additionally some teams were non-responsive because they had already disintegrated by the time follow-up interviews were scheduled.

### **3.2 Evaluation Data**

The evaluation is based on qualitative data collected from the following sources:

1. Semi-structured telephone interviews with selected course participants
2. Results of follow-up questionnaires sent to all participants from all VLDP cohorts
3. Data captured on the VLDP website on individual and group participation both during the VLDP1, VLDP2 and VLDP3 courses and during the follow-up/coaching period for VLDP1 and VLDP2
4. Results of the final course questionnaire from all VLDP cohorts (completed during Module 7)
5. Review of all existing action plans according to the following criteria:
  - Clarification of goals/objectives
  - Activities logically related to goals
  - Measurable indicators defined
  - Timeline or timeframe for implementation indicated
  - Resources indicated
6. Analysis of post-course organizational results based on indicators in the actions plans and other quantitative and qualitative data supplied by VLDP teams
7. Analysis of pre- and post-course workgroup climate data, as well as methods used to apply the climate tool
8. Reapplication of the Workgroup Climate Assessment with all teams from VLDP2 and VLDP3 to provide data on the maintenance of climate levels in the post-course period
9. Review of project design and content of learning modules as well as the project logic pathways between input-output-outcome

### **3.3 Themes for Follow-up Interviews**

The main themes for follow-up interviews with VLDP participants included:

- What results (both related to challenges and other) have the VLDP teams achieved in the period following their course? Did the implementation of action plans lead to these results?
- What factors affected the performance of teams with regard to implementing their action plans and addressing their challenge?

- To what extent did coaching/follow-up influence the teams' ability to implement their action plans?
- To what extent were team building processes maintained among teams after the end of their course?

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 VLDP Course Participation and Completion

The three Latin American VLDP courses produced a total of 35 graduating teams, as follows:

**VLDP1. October – December 2002:** 12 teams enrolled from 12 organizations with a total of 81 participants. Eleven teams of these 12 teams completed the course of which seven were from public and private organizations. The remaining four teams were from MSH field offices and the PAHO Washington DC office.

**VLDP2. March – June 2003:** 15 teams enrolled from five organizations with a total of 110 participants. All 15 teams completed the course. One team consisted of MSH facilitators-in-training from Mexico and Nicaragua; the remaining 14 teams were from public and private organizations.

**VLDP3. September – December 2003:** 10 teams enrolled from 7 organizations with a total of 106 participants. PROCOSI Bolivia originally enrolled three separate teams, one of which dropped out leaving nine teams with 91 participants that completed the course. It is worth mentioning that five of the nine teams in VLDP3 were from Bolivia, which suffered from serious economic crisis, labor strikes and social violence during several weeks of the VLDP that prevented many team members from participating. Thanks to constant support by the facilitators, these teams were able to catch up on their module exercises and all were able to complete the course.

In sum, of the 37 teams which enrolled, 35 teams completed the course. This is a 95% completion rate, which is a significant achievement for any training program, especially one conducted where participants remain at their work site, and are engaged over a 12-week period while simultaneously addressing their “regular work.”

### 4.2 Summary of Data Collected Among Selected VLDP Teams

Tables 3-5 below summarize key information regarding 21 of the 35 teams that participated in the three VLDP programs<sup>7</sup>, including: the type of team (“intact” versus “non-intact”<sup>8</sup>), selected

<sup>7</sup> Thirty-five teams completed the three VLDP courses, of which five were excluded from the sample selection (three MSH teams, the PAHO team and the VLDP facilitator team). Of the remaining 30 teams, a sample of 23 were selected based on their participation in one of the coaching periods. Information for this evaluation was gathered from 21 of the 23 teams.

<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of this evaluation, an intact team is defined as a group of individuals who work together regularly at the same work site, whether in a central or regional office or at a health facility. A non-intact team is created for the purpose of enrolling and participating in the VLDP course. This type of team generally consists of individuals who may work on the same project but do not normally work together or are geographically dispersed, or

challenge and results achieved to date. The information is organized according to the VLDP program and data collection period and summarizes the key findings gathered through telephone interviews and email questionnaires. The interview guide and email questionnaire are found in Annex 2 and 3, respectively.

**Table 2. Progress among six VLDP1 teams as of February 2004 (13 months after the end of VLDP1)**

Team	Type of team	Challenge	Highlights of results
<b>NicaSalud NGO Network, Nicaragua</b>	Intact functioning team comprised of entire management team	Achieve commitment of NicaSalud federation member organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved satisfaction among member organizations with technical and administrative support provided by NicaSalud</li> <li>Increased proportion of Federation membership dues paid on time</li> <li>Increased proportion of program and financial reports submitted on time by member organizations</li> <li>Increased participation of member organizations in the Federation meetings and trainings</li> </ul>
<b>MaxSalud, Peru</b>	Intact functioning team comprised of members from senior management team	Mobilize the participation of health personnel in maternal and child health in the process of selecting and prescribing medicines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieved greater adherence by staff physicians to prescribing guidelines and procedures for basic medicines; established quality committee with additional support from the Quality Assurance Project (University Research Corporation)</li> <li>Applied the climate tool in four clinics to encourage horizontal communication and sense of identity within these workgroups</li> <li>Entered first coaching period with the intent of strengthening existing plan which they felt was too academic, but have not completed the plan to date</li> </ul>
<b>CIES, Bolivia</b>	Intact functioning team of members from senior management team	This team did not submit an action plan but the challenge the team discussed during the course was to "strengthen the teamwork of the management team and improve organizational communication"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directors and department managers are working together and sharing same vision of organization</li> <li>Conducted formal meetings in each department to share information on new policies and procedures in the organization to overcome communication block</li> <li>Addressed problem solving among departmental managers and/or directors rather than going directly to Executive Director with grievance/complaint</li> <li>Program and finance teams working together</li> <li>Replicated course modules to regional directors</li> </ul>
<b>SS Veracruz, Mexico</b>	Intact functioning team	Achieve organizational recognition of Quality Unit within the organizational structure of the Veracruz State Secretariat of Health (SESVR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established a new quality of care unit within the Veracruz State Secretariat of Health that is officially recognized within the organizational structure</li> <li>Integrated a quality representative from all health districts in the quality of care unit</li> <li>Developed quality improvement plans for more than half of participating health districts</li> <li>Participation of an additional five teams from the State Secretariat during VLDP2</li> </ul>
<b>Prosalud, Bolivia</b>	Non intact team of three Division heads that formed team to participate in course	Develop an agile and prestigious health services institution that is accessible and attractive to the client population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved credibility and relationships between health facilities and central level</li> <li>Improved infrastructure and equipment in health facilities</li> <li>Improved corporate image, especially among higher level (paying) clients for cross subsidizing other clinics</li> <li>Action plan overtaken by overall institutional plan for modernization led by M&amp;L. So far this has led to an overall</li> </ul>

individuals who share similar job responsibilities (e.g., senior managers) but who do not normally work together or are geographically dispersed.

Team	Type of team	Challenge	Highlights of results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reduction of institutional processes.</li> <li>Three team members focused on the institutional objective of modernization rather than the action plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Ashonplafa, Honduras</b>	Intact team of six members from senior management team	Increase financial sustainability from 62% in 2002 to 70% by 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed an evaluation of the marketing system</li> <li>Completed the strategic plan for marketing systems, but it has not yet been disseminated to regional teams.</li> <li>Completed implementation of the strategic plan, including revising the organizational structure of marketing unit; hiring two market analysts; developing administrative manual for marketing unit; and defining indicators for monitoring the market, competition, and sales.</li> </ul>

**Table 3. Progress among eight VLDP2 teams as of June 2004 (11 months after the end of VLDP2)**

Team	Type of team	Challenge	Highlights of results
<b>MOH Primary Health Care, Nicaragua</b>	Non intact (intact team enrolled but only half participated in course)	Develop horizontal communication that facilitates coordinated teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted periodic meetings to review program activities, maintain communication flow and keep all team members up-to-date</li> <li>Began organizational analysis; completion date to be determined</li> <li>Team dissolved post-course making further implementation of action plan difficult</li> </ul>
<b>MOH Human Resources, Nicaragua</b>	Non intact (group of supervisors from RH department)	Achieve a motivated, aligned and inspired RH team with: a well-defined shared mission and vision; plans that are collectively developed and evaluated; goals that are achieved within given time frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Posted MOH and Departmental mission and vision in all offices</li> <li>Conducted periodic meetings to refine current annual operational plan (AOP) and monthly plans, but these plans remain unfinished</li> <li>Improved communication within teams in the Human Resources (HR) department; managers prioritize and plan activities and manage time better</li> <li>Lack of support by senior management to continue working on action plan</li> </ul>
<b>Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Nicaragua</b>	Non intact (included representatives from CRS and partners)	Improve communication within the CRS teams and partner teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replicated the VLDP modules with other members of CRS health program staff and 25 staff of partner organizations</li> <li>Changed the way they conduct meetings within Primary Health Unit: reflect on team progress rather than reviewing staff performance and intentionally share programmatic and administrative information with subordinates</li> <li>Achieved increased trust, respect and equality within the Primary Health Care team at CRS</li> </ul>
<b>CRS Ecuador</b>	Non intact (included representatives from CRS and partners)	Directors and staff working together to achieve a common objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accomplished very little. Participants in VLDP were a mix of staff from CRS main office and 1-2 staff members from each partner organization. The overall action plan had activities planned for each partner organization, but these participants had no teams to support them; in general they found themselves alone in their organizations and their activities were blocked by their Directors, especially regarding application of climate tool. Partners feel they have received little support from CRS.</li> </ul>
<b>PMSS II Central Level, Guatemala</b>	Non intact team from different departments of central MOH; half were temporary (contract) staff and have since	Improve interdepartmental and interpersonal communication (at the central level ministry)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due to the loss of half of original ten team members whose temporary contracts had ended and the reassignment of two others to responsibilities outside the central ministry, the majority of action plan was not implemented.</li> <li>Nevertheless, remaining three team members replicated the course content in each of their respective departments.</li> </ul>

Team	Type of team	Challenge	Highlights of results
	left the MOH		
<b>PMSS II Hospital San Juan de Dios, Guatemala</b>	Intact functioning team consisting of the senior management team	Increase from 75% to 100% drug prescriptions to hospital patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of overall prescriptions and 98% of basic drugs prescriptions filled by hospital for hospitalized patients per month</li> <li>Maintained 98% of basic drug supply</li> <li>Reorganized hospital drug logistics system</li> <li>Since addressing their challenge, the management team completely dissolved due to changes in the government; it is not clear whether these results were sustained</li> </ul>
<b>Ashonplafa San Pedro Sula, Honduras</b>	Intact functioning team	Improve the quality and delivery time of eye glasses lenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contracted new staff member to oversee quality assurance of lenses</li> <li>Completed market study of optical labs and products</li> </ul>
<b>SS Veracruz Primary Health Care, Mexico</b>	Non-intact team from different members of the PHC department	Improve team climate within PHC department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team began to implement their action plan through group meetings to discuss communication and dialogue within the team, but eventually abandoned the action plan.</li> </ul>

**Table 4. Progress among seven VLDP3 teams as of August 2004 (7 months after the end of VLDP3)**

Team	Type of team	Challenge	Progress to Date
<b>CEMOPLAF, Ecuador</b>	Intact team from Executive Committee	Strengthen the commitment of health staff in CEMOPLAF health facilities to prescribe medications from the institution's small pharmacies to satisfy client needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8% increase in sales in the small pharmacies</li> <li>Completed financial analysis in 100% of the small pharmacies</li> <li>Updated operational/functions manual for pharmacies and distributed to all directors of CEMOPLAF health facilities</li> <li>100% of CEMOPLAF health facilities have operationalized the norms, policies and procedures for the small pharmacies</li> <li>Held informational meetings with all staff from each health facility to review the management of small pharmacies and strategize ways to increase sales</li> <li>Health facilities are beginning to absorb greater amount of central level administrative costs in support of decentralization process</li> </ul>
<b>Mexfam, Mexico</b>	Intact team from members of management team	Strengthen organizational communication (defining staff roles and functions; disseminating functions and procedures manual; implementing performance review system; promoting social activities among staff)	<p>Awaiting Packard grant to begin implementing their action plan, but meanwhile have made the following progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised performance evaluation manual and currently piloting with Management Team to define individual roles and responsibilities</li> <li>Conduct regular staff meetings among Management Team which did not occur prior to the VLDP</li> <li>Developed clearer lines of communication within the management team and experienced fewer conflicts among members</li> <li>Carried out staff development activities and social activities including English classes, self esteem classes, and celebration of staff birthdays</li> </ul>

Team	Type of team	Challenge	Progress to Date
<b>CRS Guatemala</b>	Non-intact team from Health Unit and from Water and Sanitation Unit, plus two participants from partner organizations	Access to generic high quality and low cost ARV medicines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRS had been waiting to receive Global Funds to implement their action plan. These funds have recently been awarded to CRS-Guatemala and they are currently negotiating with a Latin American company to purchase ARVs at a reasonable price. No data on indicators yet</li> <li>Improved cohesiveness of the group– before the VLDP the Health Unit was separated from Water and Sanitation and members worked as individuals; now they have united the two units and coordinate goals, plans and resources as a whole unit</li> </ul>
<b>Save the Children, Oruro, Bolivia</b>	Non-intact team consisting of two participants from Save Regional Office and ten members of MOH SEDES office (Save's operational partner). SEDES team members now dispersed across region.	Health Services Department of Oruro (SEDES = part of MOH) working as a team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of plan by Save is still in process; team building workshop for original 10 SEDES VLDP participants plus local NGO partners is scheduled for September (primary activity in their action plan)</li> <li>Replicated content of module 5 and module 8 (follow-up module) with the remaining 13 members of technical team at Save to improve internal communication</li> <li>Achieved measurable increases in Save's monitoring indicators for Child Survival, Family Planning and Reproductive Health in Oruro Region which they attribute to a change in leadership style from vertical to horizontal by two Save participants in the VLDP</li> </ul>
<b>CSRA la Paz, Bolivia</b>	Non-intact team consisting of members from Accounting and Logistic Units	Redefine or adjust the MEGA (Grand and Audacious Institutional Goal) and its key elements over a six month period	<p>CSRA has not begun to implement its action plan; however they are currently involved in the following activities as preparation for subsequently addressing their challenge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transferred entire VLDP course to the CSRA intra-Net and currently in the process of replicating full course to remaining members of Accounting and Logistic Units</li> <li>Applied climate tool to understand why members of Logistic Unit were not working as a team</li> <li>Technical Unit has incorporated the course content into their regular staff meetings</li> <li>Management Committee has reviewed content of module 5 (communication) with the Executive Director to improve the group's internal organization and decision making capacity.</li> <li>Revised norms and policies in organization's HR Manual to promote better work climate. Currently drafting a new handbook on work ethics which includes the use of the WCA and teamwork matrix from the VLDP</li> <li>Action plan incorporated into AOP for 2005</li> </ul>
<b>CSRA Montero, Bolivia</b>	Intact team from regional CSRA office	Sensitize CSRA regional staff to the importance of improving performance in order to achieve institutional goals (the MEGA)	<p>Began to implement action plan in June 2004 and to date have achieved the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and in-depth analysis of MEGA with central level staff (CSRA la Paz); in process of revising the MEGA because the team feels it is beyond their reach</li> <li>Developed new HR policies and updated HR system including new organizational chart for regional office, revised position descriptions for regional management team, new system for selecting and contracting staff, revised performance review system</li> <li>Currently adapting VLDP content (simplifying content to match capacity of regional staff) for application with remaining CSRA Montero staff</li> </ul>
<b>PROCOSI, Bolivia</b>	Intact team from Technical Unit	Effective and efficient communication between program managers within PROCOSI technical team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have not begun to implement action plan because team has disintegrated (4 of 8 members left the organization) and organization has been in transition with new Executive Director. Nevertheless, remaining members of team have plans to propose the VLDP action plan to new Director.</li> </ul>



### 4.3 Observations on Progress in Addressing Challenges

The main themes that run across the challenges of the 21 teams summarized above are: a) strengthening internal systems and processes (at the central and regional levels); b) improving institutional communication; and c) team building. Challenges related to leadership competencies (communication or team building) were more common among VLDP2 teams than teams in VLDP1 and VLDP3. The latter group of teams tended to address more “actionable” challenges related to organizational systems and processes.

Of the 21 teams reviewed, nine developed indicators to measure their challenge and of these, three (Ashonplafa [VLDP1], Hospital San Juan de Dios [VLDP2]), and CEMOPLAF [VLDP3]) collected data on the indicators in their plans. For the majority of the teams reviewed above, it was only possible to track the activities carried out to date. It was not possible to measure the extent to which they have realized their challenge. Most of the findings presented above are reported against the activities defined in the action plans as well as additional achievements that were not directly related to the action plans, but which the teams implemented as a result of the course.

The ability of the teams to implement their plans and address their challenges varies from completion and maintenance of results to no activity at all on the action plan. The results show that the majority of the teams have made strides in implementing various activities in their plans, but that consistent and ongoing implementation of the action plan is often difficult and slow. Five teams (Ashonplafa [VLDP1], NicaSalud [VLDP1], SS Veracruz [VLDP2], Hospital San Juan de Dios [VLDP2], and CEMOPLAF [VLDP3]) stated that they have succeeded in addressing their challenge; however only four had adequate data to show that they had accomplished their desired performance. The fifth team did not have concrete data to justify the claim. Of the remaining 16 teams reviewed, five never began to work on their plans, seven implemented parts of their plans but abandoned them at some point after the course, and four were still in some state of progress at the time of the interview.

Despite the lack of follow through after the course by more than half of the teams interviewed, it is worth noting that even if a plan is not fully implemented or is not implemented at all, the process of developing one during the course still holds value for participating teams. As one interview respondent explained: *“Even though we haven’t carried out our plan...working on the action plan during the course allowed us to focus for the first time in a collective way on our goals and challenges. Now we use the same approach with other challenges that arise.”*

A variety of reasons were given by participants to explain why they had not begun to implement their action plan or had abandoned it midstream. These include: the disintegration of the team following the end of the course (due to staff changes, Ministry of Health [MOH] politics, or team members returning to their “real” operational teams after the course); the lack of authority of the team within the organizational structure to implement a given plan; lack of funds or other resources; lack of support from senior management within the organization; change in leadership within the organization; and low priority among competing demands for staff time.

The factors affecting the teams’ performance in addressing their challenges are worth considering in detail, as follows:

- **Team composition.** Teams that entered VLDP1 tended to be intact and functioning, whereas teams in VLDP2 tended to be more disperse groups of staff brought together to

participate in course (e.g., members of head office coupled with members of their partner organizations; group of supervisors within a larger department; group of regional directors or department heads). Teams in VLDP3 were a mix of both intact teams and non-intact groups.

- Overall, intact teams from VLDP1 and VLDP2 that continued to work together after the course ended had the greatest success in addressing their challenge as a team. Because more than half of the VLDP3 teams are still in the process of implementing their plans, it is too early to know whether the team composition will eventually affect their ability to carry out their plans. Among the VLDP1 and VLDP2 teams that disintegrated after the course, most had difficulty reuniting the team members to work on the action plan and eventually abandoned their action plan. Some teams suffered from geographic separation (team members in regional and central offices or those working in separate MOH units in different locations) that hindered the implementation of their plan in the period following the course, and in most cases resulted in halting it altogether. Other teams had brought together participants from different organizations with different dynamics that prevented the individuals from advancing their part of the action plan once they returned to their home organization.

These trends suggest that the basic necessary ingredient for success in addressing the selected challenge is a team that will continue to work together on a regular basis after the end of the course.

- **Need to lay the groundwork.** When asked about their progress in addressing their challenge and any associated results, respondents in some cases cited various achievements that were not directly associated with their action plans. For example, CSRA La Paz, CSRA Montero and Save Oruro all spent some time after the VLDP contemplating how to advance their action plans given that none were intact functioning teams. They first had to adjust their expectations and spend time implementing preparatory activities before addressing the ambitious challenge in their plan. These steps have delayed the process of implementing their actual plan, but were necessary to overcome lack of cohesion in the team. These types of activities served as the preparation or groundwork that was necessary in order to implement the plan and should be considered as valuable results.
- **Type of challenge selected.** Teams that selected actionable challenges focused on an organizational system or process tended to have greater success in implementing their plan. However as mentioned above, only five teams managed to fully address their challenge and reach their desired performance. In VLDP3, there was an improvement in the type of challenges selected by participating teams in terms of a focus on more concrete and measurable issues. This is the result of a deliberate effort on the part of the facilitators to guide the teams to select more concrete and measurable challenges.

Some teams selected a short term challenge that would lead to short term, output-level results. In these cases, respondents saw value in implementing their action plan because of the immediate nature of the results: *"We want to implement our plan because it will allow us to start small, and show success and then scale up."* In this way, the action plan serves as the first step of a longer term process.

- **Need for indicators to measure concrete results and justify planned activities.** Several teams encountered difficulty gaining support for action plans that proposed "intangible"

expected results, results that were difficult to measure. This was particularly true for those teams who selected challenges related to leadership competencies, such as communication and team work. In order to gain internal support for implementing the action plan, these teams needed to convince others that the plan would eventually produce tangible results. To this end, these teams acknowledged the need for adequate indicators or measurement methods, most of which had not included these in their plans.

- **Integration of the action plan into an existing Annual Operation Plan (AOP).** In some cases (NicaSalud, CSRA La Paz, CSRA Montero) the deliberate implementation of the action plan itself or of some form of that plan incorporated into an AOP or strategic plan led to the results highlighted in the tables above. This integration guaranteed continued monitoring, follow-up and funding for the activities in the plan.

While rare, it is also possible that a team may succeed in implementing an action plan even though it has not been incorporated into an existing or new AOP. In the case of Save the Children Oruro, its action plan remained separate from the organization's ongoing AOP because the AOP was developed and approved before the team had produced the action plan. However there is a general line item in the approved annual budget dedicated to institutional strengthening for the MOH which the team intends to use to cover the costs of the MOH training activities in its action plan scheduled for September 2004.

- **Initiative of individual managers.** In the absence of a deliberate implementation or follow-up of the action plan, interviewees cited qualitative changes or improvements (such as improved communication channels within their own teams, participation of subordinates in problem solving, and a change in the way team meetings are conducted) resulting from a change in the leadership style or management behaviors of a particular supervisor/manager (the VLDP participant) with his/her own subordinates. This is the case of CIES Bolivia -- one of the teams that did not submit an action plan -- where several department directors chose to adopt and use their newly acquired leadership principles and practices which created sufficient momentum to produce effects felt more broadly by the teams, units and even departments around them.

Other participants informally integrated the content of their VLDP action plans into their overall activity plan as a manager. This is the case of several teams that had selected as a challenge an internal process such as improving communication channels. These participants noted a felt need to improve matters in their own teams, departments or organizations, which motivated them to carry on despite the disintegration or disinterest of their VLDP teams after the course ended. Yet at the same time, they noted some difficulty in effectively transferring their knowledge back to their "real" organizational teams after the course.

#### **4.4 Quality of VLDP Action Plans**

The major difference between VLDP3 and previous courses was a greater emphasis on the part of the VLDP team on the development of high quality action plans during the course that were likely to be implemented and at the same time could serve as a basis for demonstrating results of the course. Starting with VLDP3, the third module was extended by one week to allow teams more time to work through the module content, produce an action plan and respond to facilitator suggestions about the plan. The VLDP facilitators emphasized the use of indicators and provided a detailed review of the logic of all action plans submitted. In addition, for the first time a liaison from the M&L M&E Unit participated in the review of action plans.

In general, a quality action plan should meet the following criteria:

- Well-defined (SMART)<sup>9</sup> challenge, preferably defined as the measurable gap between desired and actual performance
- Well-defined indicators that measure the challenge
- Activities that logically lead to achieving the challenge by addressing the identified root causes
- Timeframe for implementing each activity
- Individuals and resources assigned to carry out the activities

It is acknowledged that the VLDP did not define criteria for quality action plans in these early implementations of the VLDP. Nevertheless, the evaluator's review of the action plans in relation to these general criteria indicates that the action plans submitted by VLDP3 teams were somewhat mixed but generally of higher quality than those developed by teams during VLDP1 and VLDP2. In a few cases, the VLDP3 teams selected a reasonable and concrete challenge on their own and were off to a good start. Overall, the action plans from VLDP3 can be organized into three categories, roughly, those of high, adequate, and weak quality:

- High: Five teams succeeded in developing high quality plans with a measurable desired performance and challenge, clear logic between activities and the challenge, and reasonable indicators to measure progress in addressing the challenge (CEMOPLAF, CRS-Guatemala, SS Veracruz Panuco, CSRA La Paz, and CSRA Montero).
- Adequate: One team developed an adequate action plan (PROCOSI Administration). The challenge and desired performance are clear but the activities are likely not sufficient to address the challenge; indicators exist but are neither well defined nor sufficient to measure whether or not the challenge is achieved.
- Weak: Three teams submitted very weak plans despite suggestions and comments provided by the facilitators and M&E liaison (PROCOSI-Técnico, MEXFAM and Save the Children Oruru). Even the revised plan submitted by MEXFAM was not much improved. In these cases, the challenge and desired performance statements are extremely vague, the root cause analysis is shallow, the activities are not linked to the challenge or root cause, and there are no indicators to measure progress.

Across the three VLDP cohorts, several common weaknesses were detected by the evaluator in the action plans produced. These include: poorly defined challenge statements, poorly defined indicators to measure the challenge, and activities that are not likely to have much effect on the challenge. This is probably due to an incomplete or superficial root cause analysis whereby participants have not arrived at the true root cause for the gap between desired and actual performance and as a result the proposed activities are off track, superficial (addressing symptoms rather than causes), and therefore unlikely to lead to reducing the gap (achieving the challenge).

In addition, desired performance in some cases was more specific and measurable than the challenge and at the same time better related to the proposed indicators than the challenge. As a result, it is not clear whether teams were defining indicators to measure their desired performance or their challenge. The definition and use of indicators remains one of the leading hurdles for VLDP teams. In the end, 9 of the 21 plans (VLDP1: 1, VLDP2: 3, VLDP3: 5) reviewed during this evaluation included indicators to measure performance. And of these

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<sup>9</sup> SMART refers to Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic and Time bound

plans, only three teams have actually used these indicators to collect data to track their progress.

In summary, with few exceptions, most VLDP teams had difficulties producing an action plan with a well defined challenge and logical plan to address the challenge. This suggests that either there are widespread planning deficiencies among teams from public and private institutions, or perhaps the participatory planning approach of the course is new and challenging for the teams. The facilitators spent a great deal of time and effort in module 3 helping the teams to move through the basic planning steps and produce a quality action plan as a team. This reveals a potential need for an additional module focused solely on planning techniques to help bring teams to the same level of expertise before entering module three.

That being said, it can be misleading to assess the quality of the VLDP action plans without taking into account the benefits of team growth and cohesion that improve during the process of developing the plan. The primary objective of the third module is for participants to define a real and sound challenge together as a team, which naturally begs the question: what is more important, a technically sound challenge that is not shared by the team or an average quality challenge that is completely shared and owned by the team? There is double dimension to the course: first the integration of the team and second the alignment of the team around a well defined and significant challenge. If we only emphasize production of a sound action plan, we could lose half of the training benefits. While we are in pursuit of quality action plans to serve the basis of our measurement of the program, we cannot ignore the richness and value of the process involved.

In terms of defining challenges, it is worthwhile noting that the selection of an appropriate challenge was already discussed at length during the recent After Action Review (AAR) for the VLDP3 and the VLDP management team decided that facilitators need to be more proactive in guiding teams to select “actionable” challenges and ones that figure into existing AOPs or strategic plans. Following the conclusion of the AAR for VLDP3, facilitators of subsequent courses (for Africa and the Caribbean) began to provide much clearer guidance to participants to select challenges related to the intermediate outcomes of the M&L results framework (see Annex 4). These outcomes include improving work group climate identified through the application of the WCA as well as improving previously known or identified deficiencies in organizational management systems. Teams were also advised to select challenges that they, as a team, could address given their particular location within the organizational structure (i.e. management versus staff). In addition, even more emphasis was placed on defining adequate indicators to measure the challenge in the action plans. These are important improvements to help ensure the plans are feasible, measurable and implemented.

#### **4.5 Measuring Results of VLDP Teams**

The intent of this evaluation was to capture medium-term outcomes of the VLDP -- information on organizational outcomes resulting from teams’ progress in the implementation of their action plans. Information regarding team progress related to their stated challenge and the activities and indicators in their action plans was solicited through interviews with a selected representative from teams in the sample and e-mail questionnaires were used as a parallel attempt to gather concrete information on outcomes from teams. Follow-up interviews were intentionally carried out in stages to allow participating teams enough time to implement their action plans and also to partake in the post-course coaching periods. As a result, different periods of time were allowed to pass before conducting the follow-up interviews: 12 months

after VLDP1, 11 months after VLDP2, and 7 months following VLDP3. However this strategy yielded much less concrete information on results than expected.

First, the more time allowed to pass after course completion, the lower the response rate to interview requests. Three rounds of follow-up interviews and an extensive amount of time invested by the evaluator and VLDP facilitators yielded a total of 21 responses, 19 by interview and two by email. In addition, only 5 of 23 email questionnaires were returned, suggesting this is a poor mechanism for gathering post-course information from VLDP teams.

Second, most informants had only vague information to offer on concrete results. This is especially true given that the majority of VLDP teams have not collected indicator-based data. It is worth mentioning that only four interviewees -- from Ashonplafa, Hospital San Juan de Dios, CEMOPLAF, and CRS Guatemala -- had some knowledge about the indicators in their action plan. Most respondents could not remember the indicators in their plans, did not themselves have accurate information on the indicators or their teams had not used the indicators to track their progress. According to the participants interviewed, only the four teams mentioned above were actually measuring progress according the indicators in their plans; the others relied on a more informal, periodic progress updates from staff involved in the plan. Therefore, for the most part, indicator-based data is not available on the results achieved by these organizations and descriptive (sometimes anecdotal) evidence is the only means to measure their outcomes. In addition, five teams from the VLDP3 are still in the process of implementing their plans, making it difficult to measure results at this time.

The experience of conducting this evaluation has revealed two lessons about measuring team performance. First, VLDP teams should be aware from the outset that M&L intends to monitor their performance based on the measurable progress in implementing their plans which assumes the use of indicators in the plans. Teams should be informed early on during the course when to expect monitoring/follow-up by MSH in order to avoid any surprise or confusion when the time arrives. Additionally, each team should select a spokesperson or representative who will respond to interviews or requests for information during the monitoring/follow-up period.

Second, given the varied degree of implementation and abandonment of action plans among VLDP teams, M&L should also consider alternative ways of measuring the outcomes of the VLDP program. The action plan may not be the most appropriate basis for outcome measurement, especially if the majority of teams are not measuring their progress based on objective measures such as indicators.

Finally, the timing of the follow-up evaluation is critical to ensure an adequate response rate and reduce the potential of recall bias.

#### **4.6 Virtual Coaching and Follow-up**

A total of 35 teams “graduated” from the three VLDP courses, receiving a certificate of participation based on meeting course requirements. M&L asserts that follow-up, through the practices of facing challenges and receiving feedback and support, is essential to developing managers’ capacity to effectively lead and manage groups. This is one of M&L’s five principles for developing managers who lead. Consistent with this principle, coaching was offered to seven VLDP1 teams via the virtual network LeaderNet from March – May 2003. Due to low levels of participation in the coaching on the LeaderNet site, a second period of coaching was offered to the same VLDP1 teams plus an additional 14 teams from VLDP2 from August – November 2003. This time limited use of the VLDP site and email communication served as the

main vehicle for providing support to the teams. Upon conclusion of the VLDP3 course, a more structured, module-based coaching was offered to all nine teams over two periods: three weeks in March 2004 and four weeks in June – July 2004. The status of the three VLDP cohorts and their participation in coaching is presented below.

Status	VLDP1		VLDP2		VLDP3		Total
Offered coaching		7		14		9	30
Enrolled in coaching	4		6		5		15
Completed coaching	1		3		5		9
Did not complete coaching	3		3		0		6
Did not enroll in coaching	3		8		4		15
Not offered coaching*		4		1		0	5
Total		11		15		9	35

\*Coaching was not offered to three teams from MSH field offices, the PAHO DC office and the team of VLDP facilitators.

The VLDP experimented with structured and non-structured approaches to coaching and both methods showed similar results of low enrollment and poor participation. During the first attempt to offer coaching and follow-up to VLDP1 teams, four teams enrolled but only one completed the process. As a result, a second coaching period was launched in August 2003 using the VLDP site (not the Leadernet Web site) and a total of 18 teams from both VLDP1 and VLDP2 were invited to participate (14 teams from VLDP2 and the four teams from VLDP1 that had enrolled in the first coaching period). The facilitators experienced similar problems of poor participation and low responsiveness among the teams. Six teams enrolled in this second period of coaching and three completed it. While coaching for VLDP1 and VLDP2 teams helped the teams to refocus on their plan, refine the plan according to Kotter's eight steps of change management, redefine the challenge and revise the selected indicators, in the end, only one team submitted a revised plan.

In response to the experience with coaching VLDP1 and two teams, the coaching approach for VLDP3 teams was designed to be more focused, time limited and demanding like the VLDP course itself to attract the attention and gain commitment of the teams once they had graduated from the course. For this third coaching period, two separate modules were developed that followed a format similar to the VLDP learning modules, including individual reading assignments, group homework, posting to the Forum and discussions in the café. The first module was posted on the VLDP site and lasted two weeks (March 1 – 12, 2004) with additional time appended at the end to allow teams more time to submit their group work. Due to delays with producing the second module, it was eventually posted on the Cali-Des Web site from June 28– July 23, 2004. This time all nine VLDP3 teams were invited to participate in coaching and five enrolled. While all teams held their face-to-face meetings during the first module to prepare and discuss their group work, only one team submitted its completed assignment. During the second module, participation was even lower, both on the site and during the team meetings. While the teams appreciated the content of the coaching modules which helped them review their plans using time management, strategic thinking and problem solving approaches, in the end, only one team submitted its revised plan, and participation by all five teams during the two coaching modules very low and sporadic.

With the exception of Hospital San Juan de Dios, NicaSalud and CEMOPLAF, the teams that participated in the three coaching periods were largely incomplete and inconsistent. Most teams had difficulty reuniting the members of their teams to actively participate, which is one of

the main reasons six of the teams dropped out in the coaching offered to VLDP1 and VLDP2. Comments from the six teams that dropped out from the first two coaching periods revealed several important barriers to reassembling their teams. Common responses included: difficulties maintaining motivation to meet as a team due to the long unstructured period of coaching (3 months) and the lack of guided assignments and deadlines during coaching; the lack of a felt need on the part of these teams to reunite to improve their action plans; and in some cases, the teams had not continued working together after the course (they were not an intact team to begin with) and had difficulties convening as a team for the coaching period. For example, one respondent explained: *“Since we were not a natural team to begin with, it was difficult to reunite as a team and commit to working together again for the coaching period.”*

Respondents also mentioned that the follow-up coaching period lacked particular characteristics that had inspired such strong commitment to maintaining participation levels during the VLDP course, including the structured modules, demanding exercises and limited timeframe. Yet even when structure and content were incorporated into the coaching for VLDP3 (two separate modules were developed), participation and team activity was very limited throughout.

Interviews with teams that did not choose to enroll in any coaching period indicate that their main obstacles were the perceived low priority of coaching and the non-intact nature of their original teams. While they would appreciate having ongoing contact and interaction to maintain their knowledge and skills, they did not perceive the coaching modules as a priority for advancing their action plans given their other work demands. In addition, several of these teams had already disintegrated by the time any coaching period was offered and were not successful in reuniting for the purpose of enrollment.

For those who did participate, coaching provided an occasion for participants to meet together again as a team. It served as a reminder for teams to revisit their action plans and collectively review their progress to date. For example, a respondent that participated in the VLDP3 coaching commented on the utility of the coaching: *“We had to reinforce some aspects in our action plan. For example, unrealistic things that we put in the purchasing manual for the small pharmacies...coaching gave us the space to review our progress to date and to polish our approach. It is worth the trouble not only for the content but also the fact that it caused us to meet again as a team with a common goal.”*

In summary, the fact that only half (15) of the 30 eligible teams<sup>10</sup> enrolled in any coaching period and of these nine completed coaching could indicate three possible barriers: 1) teams are not continuing to work on their action plans and therefore see little utility in participating in a coaching exercise that is focused primarily on action plan revision; 2) coaching is not perceived as a priority given the time constraints and work loads of the teams; and 3) teams are not continuing to work together after the course and are therefore not able to reunite for the purposes of coaching.

#### **4.7 Use of the Work Climate Assessment (WCA)**

One of the VLDP's primary approaches for developing leadership competencies and skills is for teams to work together to address an organizational challenge. It is therefore appropriate that work climate among participating teams serves as an outcome measure for the course. The first VLDP did not include a means to measure work climate because M&L's Work Climate

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<sup>10</sup> Teams eligible for coaching included all teams that graduated from the VLDP except five: the MSH office teams, PAHO team and team of facilitators-in-training.



Assessment (WCA) tool was not available in time for the October 2002 launch of the program. Participants were asked in a questionnaire in the final module to retrospectively rate six questions, as follows:

<i>How did your team work develop during the program with respect to each of the following affirmations?</i>	4 = Improved significantly 3 = Improved a little 2 = Stayed the same 1 = Deteriorated
1. We are recognized for individual contributions	
2. We feel we have a common purpose	
3. We understand each others capabilities	
4. We are clear what is expected in our work	
5. We participate in decisions that affect the workgroup	
6. We take pride in our work	

It should be noted that these data were not intended to be used as a substitute for a climate measure.

During VLDP2 and VLDP3, the WCA tool was incorporated into Module 1 as one of the first exercises performed online by participating teams. These data were intended to serve as a baseline for workgroup climate. However, no follow-up application of the WCA was included in the course. The six climate questions described above remained in the final questionnaire during VLDP2 and VLDP3; however these cannot be used to make comparisons to the WCA baseline scores. Therefore given the way the course was structured, it is impossible to measure change in work climate among teams participating in VLDPs 2 and 3.

On-line response rates to the WCA in Module 1 were much lower during VLDP2 than VLDP3: 34% of participants (37 of 110) completed it online in VLDP2 as did 53% (48 of 91) in VLDP3. In VLDP2, participants from 10 teams responded online, but none of the teams were fully represented. Similarly in VLDP3, participants from all nine teams responded online, and of these two teams were fully represented. It is likely that members of some teams completed the tool in their workbooks and did not post their responses online, but these data are not available.

Part of the problem of low responsiveness may be the way the WCA is presented during the course. It is presented as a way to measure workgroup climate, but climate is not tied to the course as a leadership outcome. The VLDP should explain how positive climate is created and that improved workgroup climate is an expected outcome linked to participation in the VLDP. It is a measure of change within the team that allows them to track their own growth and progress as a result of the course.

Despite the moderate online response rates, five of the nine teams in VLDP3 that responded to the WCA found the analysis of their climate data rewarding and worthwhile. Each of the five teams posted comments in the Forum about their positive experience reviewing their data together as a team. For example, the posting from one team explained that during their team meeting *"the times when there was the greatest exchange of opinions was when we analyzed the results of the Team Climate matrix since we took into account the diversity of our points of view in order to analyze the results and to identify and prioritize the actions to follow."*

Another team mentioned that there was *"much discussion on the results of the 'work climate' but in the end we agreed on the main points of discussion; we analyzed the actual performance results and drew up two actions: 1) that as leaders we must try to stimulate and recognize the*

*abilities of the team using mechanisms that help to elevate self-esteem and 2) [we must] give our colleagues greater opportunity for participation.”*

Motivating teams to effectively use the WCA tool on-line, providing feedback and guidance to teams according to their climate results and measuring pre/post course changes in climate represent an ongoing challenge to the VLDP. These issues have been discussed during the AAR of each VLDP and improvements have been made in each subsequent course. By the launch of the fourth VLDP in March 2004 for African teams, the full WCA was included in module 7 to measure post-course climate levels in comparison to the baseline in module 1. Nevertheless online completion rates need to improve if workgroup climate is to serve as an outcome measure for the course.

One of the objectives of this evaluation, consistent with the M&E Plan developed for the VLDP, included the reapplication of the WCA among teams from VLDP2 and VLDP3 at a point following the end of the program to measure change in climate levels over time. In the end, this plan was not pursued because the facilitators were already facing low participation rates during the coaching periods and it did not seem wise to overwhelm the teams with other requirements as well.

#### **4.8 Strengthened Teams**

Despite the lack of WCA results to demonstrate concretely that work climate tended to improve among the participating teams, responses to the final module questionnaires, feedback to facilitators and information collected during individual interviews conducted for this evaluation all suggest that the program did indeed strengthen the participating teams. While we are not able to measure the change in workgroup climate in the VLDP cohorts included in this evaluation, we are able to identify how teams are strengthened. The following are participant statements that capture the effect of the VLDP on strengthening teams. Many of the capacities mentioned below relate to climate items measured in the WCA. These are not intended to serve as proxy indicators for climate but provide a qualitative account of team capacities that may be necessary precursors or compliments to improving climate.

*"We discussed the existing confusion and uncertainty in our institution... the group work helped us to analyze problematic situations, and at the same time it helped us to identify concrete actions to take as a team."*

*"Our team learned to focus on a single objective and prioritize among the barriers standing in our way so we could reach our goal."*

*"The definition of a challenge is something that we now put in practice in order to have objectives and goals that we can work toward together, so that everyone moves in the same direction."*

*"We realized our challenge was not as difficult as we first thought once we pulled it apart, analyzed it and put solutions into a plan."*

*"We are applying the stages of Kotter's model since it allowed us to understand why we were not advancing with our strategic plan and what we would need to do to move forward better."*

*"While trying to identify the problems and challenge we have proposed to address, we discovered that team work gives better results because it is easier to resolve problems as a team."*

*"We always judge how good an institution is according to the quantitative data that it produces, but we never analyze how it is that they arrived at those data. With this course we can analyze such things and take into account many points of view."*

*"During the course we discussed and reflected on topics that we normally don't take into account during the routine of daily work but that are very important for personal and group development."*

*"What is new for us is the coalition of the team and the freedom of expression that occurred during the group exercises."*

*"As a result of the course, we questioned our roles as managers and decision makers in the institution and realized decisions cannot stay within a small group so we have increased staff participation in operational and policy decisions."*

These participant responses describe capacities that are indicative of a strengthened team and are similar to many of the climate items included in the WCA. These include the capacity to focus, plan, participate, share opinions and appreciate the contributions of others. The participants' own identification of newly acquired capacities indicates many of the necessary elements of workgroup climate. It therefore appears that strengthened teams may be an unstated outcome of the course that can be measured qualitatively and that is partially indicative of improved work group climate.

As a mechanism for team building, the VLDP also provided a space and time for teams to meet for a new purpose. Prior to the course, participants tended to meet for specific operational reasons (to review an Annual Operational Plan, develop a proposal, or participate in workshops) but never to discuss and analyze their performance as leaders and managers. The course made them reflect together, for the first time, on these new topics. For example, a respondent from CSRA Montero explains that: *"We have always met regularly for procedural or operational reasons (planning, monitoring, etc) but never to analyze our own performance. Now in our meetings we reflect on changes in our behavior as leaders."*

As the following example of CEMOPLAF illustrates, participation in the VLDP can also help teams to change deep seated decision making dynamics:

#### **CEMOPLAF Ecuador**

*"The course continues to affect the executive committee and goes far beyond the challenge of our action plan. Before the course, the committee meetings were for informative purposes and followed a vertical format, but now the meetings exist to make decisions, together. Before we had meetings just to comply, but we did not exchange any thoughts. Before the course, all changes in the institution were the sole decision of the Executive Director. Now the Executive Director no longer makes the decisions herself. Now the meetings are more "intense," (with differing opinions that sometimes clash) more productive and more informal. When we began to work with the VLDP, the Executive Director saw that we could have the backing of the whole team. And when we all contribute ideas, it makes us all more productive as a team."*

*The course has also touched the clinics (in an indirect way)... now the health centers value the work of the administration because they see that we are making collective decisions now. Now they request the help of the administration on clinic procedures and processes of the clinics. This relationship has helped us work with the clinics to reactivate the small pharmacies which were an important financial strategy and a way to fund CEMOPLAF'S social mission. It was also the challenge we had selected as a team. According to the financial assessment of the clinics, the most productive clinics (based on measures of expenditures, income and sustainability) were those that ran the small pharmacies correctly. This finding helped motivate the other clinics to comply."*

Following the completion of the course, participants tended to adopt a variety of processes and tools to strengthen their teams, including:

- Application of self assessments tools provided during the course with other staff members and setting aside time for open reflection on these insights
- Use of Kotter's eight steps both to revise existing plans and to enhance in-depth planning processes
- Use of Performance Improvement (PI) processes for broad participation in both strategic and operational planning sessions
- Holding regular information sharing meetings was a very common technique adopted by participants. The emphasis of these meetings is to improve coordination among staff and increase equal access to information
- Encouraging frank and open communication among staff (avoiding the spread of rumors) and reducing vertical paternalistic lines of authority
- Application of the WCA climate tool with members of the participant's "real" operational team that did not participate in the course
- Replication of the course content among staff who did not participate in the course

Because participants mentioned a special interest in sharing the course with their subordinates and/or colleagues, the last point above deserves additional attention here. Across the three cohorts, there was a common desire to replicate the VLDP modules with staff that did not

participate in the course, or with staff from partner organizations in order to share this knowledge, maintain the information fresh in their minds and spark an internal momentum for change. Of the teams interviewed, six undertook this as an extra activity which was not included in their action plan and which commonly served as a preparatory initial step prior to implementing their action plan. With the exception of CSRA La Paz, which is replicating the course virtually via their intranet, several teams are using some combination of the workbook and content from the CDrom to replicate the course through meetings or more structured workshops. Among these teams, most have noted the need for simple, companion training materials in print form to allow participants to replicate the course with others within their institution. Ideally this would include a facilitator guide that spells out, step by step, the basic methodology of the course (how to perform the individual and group work, rotation of coordinators, leading face-to-face discussions groups to replace the virtual café) and the course content with simplified language and examples for lower levels of personnel. This could be a low cost and effective way to extend the course to those working more directly with service delivery or to other levels of an organization.

## **5. Conclusions**

MSH delivered three VLDP courses in Latin America from October 2002 to December 2003 which reached a total of 282 participants from 35 teams belonging to 24 organizations in eight countries. The VLDP has proven to be an innovative and cost effective way of developing leadership capacity among a large number of managers and staff members. The course was delivered to multiple organizations at a time as well as multiple teams within a single institution which indicates the versatility and adaptability of the program to client needs. The facilitators for all three VLDP courses were physically located in Mexico, illustrating the feasibility of using the internet for distance training within Latin America.

The following is a summary of the main findings from the evaluation:

### **Action Plan Implementation**

The 21 teams reviewed in this report showed mixed results in their progress in implementing their action plans. While most teams had begun to implement their plans, only five had fully addressed their challenge and four were still in some state of progress. The remaining 12 teams either had never implemented their plans or had abandoned them after carrying out a few activities. Teams from VLDP1 and VLDP3 showed greater progress in addressing their challenges than those from VLDP2.

Two of the most important characteristics common to the five teams that successfully addressed their challenges were that they were intact functioning teams and they selected an actionable challenge. Teams that abandoned or never began to implement their plan were more likely to be non-intact teams that had chosen a communication or teambuilding challenge. The main factors that affected the ability of teams to address their challenges are outlined below:

- **Team composition:** some VLDP teams were intact functioning teams that had worked together before the course and continued to work together after the course ended. These teams had the greatest amount of success in addressing their challenges. Other teams were formed for the purpose of taking the course and were often made up of individuals from geographically or administratively dispersed groups – these teams had more difficulty implementing their plans and addressing their challenges after the course

ended. They worked together well during the course, but after its completion they returned to their normal routines and rarely met or worked together again as a team.

It is worth noting that participants who are members of non-intact teams (those formed for the purpose of the course) which disintegrate after the course ends may need additional support to transition back to their “real” or permanent teams and put into practice the new behaviors and skills.

- **The type of challenge selected:** teams that focused solely on improving internal processes such as communication and team building were less likely to implement their plans while those teams focusing on an organizational system, structure or process had more success implementing their plans. Respondents from these teams explained that the latter type of challenge allowed them to show concrete results based on concrete actions in order to generate internal buy-in for implementing their plans.
- **The action plan itself:** some are logical and clear with well distributed responsibilities among team members and measurable indicators of success; in other cases, it is unclear how activities in the plan will lead to addressing the challenge and achieving the desired performance.
- **Integration (or lack thereof)** of the content of VLDP action plan into an existing or new annual operational plan to ensure its completion.
- **Time (or lack thereof)** to devote to regular team meetings to monitor or follow-up on action plans once the VLDP course had ended. Several participants cited the pressure of other competing priorities, such as donor funding requests, that were deemed more important than the action plan.
- **Support (or lack thereof)** of the organizational directors/executives for the team or the selected challenge.

## Measuring Results of the VLDP

The current expectation within M&L is that the measurement of results (outcomes) of the VLDP program is based on results achieved through the implementation of the action plans developed during the course. Without this, it is difficult to document the concrete value of the program and relate the organizational outcomes to participation in the course. However, given the limited amount of concrete data on these outcomes from three courses delivered in Latin America, M&L should consider changing its expectations regarding the measurable “results” of this course or at least clarify what it is seeking. If a team does not implement their action plan, does that mean the course did not produce the desired outcome? Could it simply reflect their inability to implement the plan due to their level or role within the organization, or to external or internal changes in the environment? Could other accomplishments such as strengthened teams serve as adequate intermediate outcomes and a necessary precursor to producing organizational results? Most teams maintain they have worked on individual items in their action plan but have not measured their progress, despite in some cases, the presence of indicators. If teams do not feel the need to monitor or measure their progress against their desired performance, then how can M&L expect them to do this? Most organizations or ministry programs are sufficiently

occupied with measuring the performance of their service delivery and as a result, monitoring their action plan may not be as high a priority.

This follow-up evaluation has found that participation in the VLDP affects the team and the organization beyond the implementation of the action plan. Basing the assessment of VLDP outcomes primarily on action plan implementation is a narrow and potentially misleading basis for measurement that may miss other important changes that occur as a result of the course. The intention of VLDP program is that the action plan serves a double purpose: a means for measuring course outcomes and a key mechanism for developing leadership capacities. Measuring the latter is often eclipsed by the need for data on the former. As a blended learning program, the VLDP engages participants in a unique way that affects their perception of the program, their desire to participate and ultimately the quality of their learning. Participants' opinions of the utility of the course are overwhelmingly positive across the three courses. They point to the value of building effective teams and changing the manager's behavior which can affect the organization beyond the results of a single action plan. These are the types of outcomes we should focus on in future evaluations.

### **Using the WCA**

Applying the WCA and analyzing the results appears to be a useful initial exercise for teams entering the course and one which kindles a great deal of discussion and self analysis among participants. However, it is not clear what purpose the WCA serves in the VLDP. The WCA data were not used as a training or program strategy in VLDPs 2 and 3. The course does ask teams to analyze their climate scores in a team meeting but does not assist them in analyzing and interpreting their data. The course does not lead teams to recognize strengths and weaknesses that affect their climate, nor does it ask teams to strategize ways to address these deficiencies as they make their way through the course. As a result, the climate scores and the team analysis are not woven back into the content of the course as a strategy to strengthen teams or improve climate, which is presumably an expected outcome of any leadership intervention. Nor did VLDPs 2 and 3 include a post-course application of the WCA, so participants could measure the change in climate within their teams over the duration of the course, and so the VLDP facilitators and the M&E Unit could measure course outcomes related to climate. The WCA application is a stand alone activity that is not referred to again after the first module. As noted above, the deficiency in the use of the WCA has been addressed in VLDPs offered subsequent to the Latin American courses.

### **Coaching and Follow-up**

The experience with both structured and non-structured coaching for VLDP teams showed that both approaches suffered from low enrollment and poor participation levels. Of the 30 teams eligible for coaching, a total of 15 teams enrolled in a coaching period following the conclusion of their course. Nine teams completed coaching but only two fulfilled the basic requirements (submission of a revised action plan). Regardless of the format used, it was difficult to motivate teams to meet together again after the course given their competing time constraints, lack of action plan implementation, and break up of many teams after the course. It is unlikely that virtual follow-up in any form can overcome these barriers. Yet some form of post-course support and coaching is needed. The telephone interviews conducted for this study were seen by some teams as motivational and served as a form of follow-up support. Five teams mentioned that they met with their team members prior to the interview for this evaluation which resulted in renewed interest in addressing their challenge.

## Strengthening Teams

Participation in the VLDP has contributed to the strengthening of existing, intact teams with an improved capacity to focus on their challenges, share common goals, and communicate openly. Strengthened teams, in addition to workgroup climate and action plan implementation, should be considered a viable outcome measure for the VLDP. However if stronger teams are an expected outcome of the course, then the selection and enrollment of teams by the VLDP should consistently emphasize the need for intact, functioning teams.

A characteristic common to both intact and non-intact teams was the desire to share the course content with other staff members who had not participated. This was especially true among participants from non-intact teams that were returning to work with their regular unit or workgroup after the course. Course replication – either formal or informal – was seen as a necessary strategy both to pave the way for implementing their action plans by bringing others on board with the concepts and to enhance the effect of the course beyond the team that had participated because in most cases only a few staff members among many are able to participate directly.

## 6. Recommendations

The follow-up evaluation of three Latin American cohorts in the VLDP has led to several recommendations for consideration by the VLDP team, the M&E Unit, and M&L. The recommendations are organized by those relating to VLDP design and implementation, and those related to future evaluations.

### VLDP Design and Implementation:

**M&L and the VLDP team should reexamine existing expectations for course outcomes, especially the function and importance of teams' progress in implementing their action plans as a key indicator of results and impact of the VLDP.**

The expected outcomes defined in the monitoring and evaluation plan for the VLDP hinge largely on progress related to the implementation of team action plans. However, the experience of three VLDP courses has shown that less than 50% of teams are implementing their plans, and even fewer are reaching their stated goals. As a result, M&L should consider whether action plan implementation is a necessary and realistic outcome for the VLDP. It may not be an appropriate measure of success for the course given the multiple factors that can affect whether or not a team is successful in addressing its challenge. Additional outcomes need to be defined for the VLDP in the future, especially measures related to changes in team functioning and changes in leading practices. For the latter, existing M&L leadership indicators should be considered.

**The VLDP team should consistently apply existing procedures for application to the VLDP to assure that intact or currently functioning teams enroll in the course.**

In as much as possible, the VLDP should enroll functioning teams for the course as this has shown to have an important effect on the ability of a team to address its challenge in the period following the course. A full definition should be provided to clarify that a functioning team consists of individuals that work together on a regular basis as an intact team rather than a dispersed group of people pulled together for the purpose of the course.



**M&L should explore the use of current follow-up mechanisms (e.g., LeaderNet) in the event that non-intact teams enroll in the VLDP in the future in order to provide support to teams that disintegrate after course.**

Participants who are members of teams that disintegrate after the course may need additional support to transition back to their “real” or permanent team and put into practice the new behaviors and skills. This transition support could take the form of virtual coaching or additional content added to one of the learning modules in the course. It is recognized that the potential for implementation of this recommendation is challenging in view of limited funding and time available to M&L.

**M&L and its LeaderNet program should analyze how to better support teams after the course and whether coaching should revolve around the action plan.**

VLDP teams have frequently mentioned the need for ongoing facilitated support after the end of the course but have not shown commitment to the types of coaching support offered to date. What is not clear is the focus of the support needed: should coaching continue to revolve around action plan implementation? Or should the content stem from needs defined by the participants? It appears that the majority of teams were not responsive to coaching focused exclusively on action plan implementation and therefore designing coaching in response to specific needs identified by teams also merits consideration and exploration.

Additionally, it is important to analyze how M&L and the VLDP team expect the VLDP to affect the organization beyond the action plan. Is a trickle-over or trickle-down effect expected to reach other managers or service providers? And are these expected to be included as measurable outcomes for the course? If this is the case, then the VLDP needs to consider how it can support this kind of transition after the end of the course. This kind of support is broader than coaching focused on action plan implementation and takes into account teams that are unable to implement their plans but still affecting the organization in meaningful ways.

Finally, if coaching is considered to be an important element of virtual leadership development, then adequate resources and planning should be part of the VLDP design from the outset.

**The VLDP team should continue to communicate course requirements and expectations prior to the course.**

Lack of time was a very common constraint to consistent participation of teams throughout the different courses. A suggestion commonly heard from teams that experienced this obstacle is that course requirements be better explained and communicated well in advance of the course so the teams can program their time accordingly given the other competing demands in their schedules.

In addition, prior to the course, the VLDP should communicate to interested organizations that they will be contacted by MSH following the course for interviews to monitor their progress. The organizations should be aware from the beginning that participating in the VLDP implies an external monitoring of their progress in addressing their selected challenge and other outcomes. Some participants mentioned that knowing this beforehand might help motivate the teams to follow their plans more closely.

**The VLDP team should continue to address the role and purpose of the WCA within the program.**

The VLDP team should determine the purpose of using the WCA during the course. If it is intended to enhance the program design, then better instructions and feedback are needed by facilitators on how teams should interpret and use the data. If it is intended to provide outcome data for M&L, then the VLDP team needs to consider more effective ways to encourage participant teams to enter their data online.

**The VLDP team should consider the feasibility, merits, and utility of providing materials for course replication by participants within an organization.**

Several teams in the three cohorts shared a common desire to replicate the course within their institution. Companion materials could be developed to allow participants to replicate the course and share their learning with others from the same institution so that a greater proportion can be covered without the expense of the full VLDP program. This could augment participation within a given institution and scale up the effects of the VLDP without the cost of full course facilitation.

**The VLDP team should consider developing an additional module focused solely on planning techniques for participants.**

A review of action plans for this evaluation shows that most teams had difficulties designing an action plan that met the basic quality criteria used by the evaluator. Common problems included a poorly defined challenge, a weak understanding of the root cause analysis, an insufficient link between activities and the selected challenge, and inadequate indicators. This suggests that participating teams either lack basic planning capacities or have difficulties adapting to the performance improvement approach of the VLDP. Facilitators and (beginning with VLDP3) the M&E liaison spend much of module 3 helping teams adopt basic planning techniques in order to produce a feasible action plan as a team, and even then, only a small proportion of the resulting plans actually meet minimum standards of quality. Consequently the need for an additional module focused on providing teams with basic planning skills merits consideration.

**The VLDP team should continue to carry out the After Action Review (AAR) of each VLDP in order to identify immediate programmatic modifications in the course design and implementation strategy. M&L should assure that adequate funding is available for needed modifications.**

Many of the observations in this evaluation were already brought up and discussed by the VLDP team during the various AARs. Therefore findings from the participant interviews tend to confirm what the VLDP facilitators and delivery team had already recognized as strengths and weaknesses in the program during the AAR. In this way, follow-up evaluations serve the role of validating findings from the AAR and identifying and documenting the longer-term impact of the course. While the AAR is an effective process, funding must be available to modify the course or the implementation strategy, if needed.

### Evaluation of Future VLDPs:

**The M&E Unit and the VLDP team should discuss the optimum timing of future VLDP follow-up evaluations for documentation of medium-term outcomes. The timing should ensure adequate respondent recall and yet allow sufficient time for teams to make progress in implementing their action plans and applying new leadership competencies and skills.**

Data for this evaluation were collected in stages with differing lengths of time between course end and data collection. This staging was done partly to accommodate the delivery of coaching periods and partly because the non-responsiveness of participants lengthened the data collection periods. This experience showed that the more time has elapsed since the end of the course, the greater the risk of non-responsiveness and inadequate recall among respondents. Yet at the same time, delayed follow-up allowed teams more time to practice new skills and implement their action plans. Experience shows that we need to strike a balance between recall and results. In the case of VLDP3, follow-up eight months after the course was slightly too long a period to ensure definitive recall among respondents, and yet too short to document organizational results. Most of the teams had not completed their action plans in this space of time, much less produced organizational outcomes. Some had not even started their action plans for a variety of reasons including the need to wait for a new budget year and organizational paralysis due to changes in upper management. Therefore follow-up should occur at an appropriate time to reduce recall bias and increase participation in follow-up interviews, and at the same time realistic and measurable outcomes should be identified for the chosen time-frame.

**The M&E Unit and VLDP team should determine a more effective way than phone interviews to document results of the VLDP.**

Participant interviews may not be the most effective way to capture results on action plans or organizational results in general because they depend on the knowledge of the interviewee who has been selected at random. Depending on his/her role in the organization, this person may or may not have accurate information regarding indicators from the VLDP action plan or data on organizational performance in general. Therefore a different method should be used to solicit information on progress against the plan and results achieved. This communication could come directly from the course facilitators or from the M&E liaison to all members of the team at predetermined intervals after the course ends and could include online questionnaires. It is necessary to inform teams early on, during the VLDP, that they will be contacted for monitoring purposes after the course ends.

**M&L needs to ensure that population and non-population funding is available for future follow-up evaluations of the VLDP.**

This evaluation is limited to the three Latin American cohorts that participated in the delivery of the first three VLDP courses. The VLDP team has since made a number of modifications and improvements to the program which merit their own in-depth follow-up. A great deal could be learned by following up each of the subsequent VLDP programs and producing an evaluation series over time; however non-population funding is necessary to carry out some of these evaluations given their focus on HIV/AIDS.

## Annex 1: Summary of VLDP Teams

No.	Organization/Team	Country	Participants
<b>VLDP1 Latin America</b>			
1	PROSALUD	Bolivia	8
2	CIES	Bolivia	4
3	MSH Bolivia	Bolivia	6
4	MSH do Brasil	Brazil	4
5	MOH Guatemala, PMSS II	Guatemala	10
6	ASHONPLAFA	Honduras	6
7	State Health Secretariat (SS) Veracruz	Mexico	4
8	NicaSalud	Nicaragua	8
9	MSH Nicaragua	Nicaragua	10
10	MaxSalud	Peru	10
11	PAHO	USA	3
<b>VLDP2 Latin America</b>			
1	ASHONPLAFA San Pedro Sula	Honduras	6
2	ASHONPLAFA Tegucigalpa	Honduras	11
3	SS Veracruz San Andrés Tuxtla	Mexico	7
4	SS Veracruz Extension of Coverage Office	Mexico	8
5	SS Veracruz Martinez de la Torre	Mexico	7
6	SS Veracruz Primary Health Care	Mexico	5
7	SS Veracruz Secondary Health Care	Mexico	8
8	MOH Nicaragua Primary Health Care	Nicaragua	17 (two teams)
9	MOH Nicaragua Human Resources	Nicaragua	17 (two teams)
10	Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	Nicaragua	6
11	MOH Guatemala PMSS II Central Office	Guatemala	11
12	MOH Guatemala PMSS II Roosevelt Hospital	Guatemala	11
13	MOH Guatemala PMSS II San Juan de Dios Hospital	Guatemala	11
14	Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	Ecuador	10
15	Facilitators-in-Training	Mexico	5
<b>VLDP3 Latin America</b>			
1	Save the Children	Bolivia	12
2	Consejo de Salud Rural Andino (CSRA) la Paz	Bolivia	12
3	Consejo de Salud Rural Andino (CSRA) Montero	Bolivia	9
4	PROCOSI Administrative Team	Bolivia	15
5	PROCOSI Technical team	Bolivia	9
6	CEMOPLAF	Ecuador	11
7	MEXFAM	Mexico	16
8	SS Veracruz Panuco	Mexico	10
9	Catholic Relief Services	Guatemala	12

## Annex 2: Individual Interview Guide

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### **Programa de Gerencia y Liderazgo Evaluación del Programa Virtual de Desarrollo de Liderazgo (VLDP 1 – 2 – 3)**

#### **Guía de Entrevista Individual**

**Introducción:** *Estamos haciendo una evaluación del Programa Virtual de Liderazgo la cual es basada en la información de las evaluaciones de cada modulo del programa, la retroalimentación de los participantes durante el programa, y ahora entrevistas con participantes de cada organización. Los participantes para las entrevistas han sido seleccionados de forma aleatoria. El propósito de las entrevistas es el de conocer la experiencia de los participantes en el período después de la conclusión del programa. Quisiera enfatizar que sus respuestas son confidenciales y anónimas. Se va a consolidar la información de las entrevistas, sin utilizar nombres, en un informe con la finalidad de comunicar los éxitos del programa e identificar los mejoramientos indicados para el futuro. La entrevista durará aproximadamente 30 minutos.*

1. ¿Cuál es su cargo actual y cuantos años lleva con su organización? ¿Participó usted en el primero (2002) o segundo (2003) curso virtual? ¿El equipo consistió de cuantas personas en este tiempo? Las mismas personas siguen trabajando juntas ahora que el curso ha terminado?
2. ¿Cómo producto del curso, desarrollaron ustedes un plan de acción? Cual es el proposito (desempeño deseado) de este plan de acción? ¿Porqué priorizaron dicho desempeño deseado? ¿Cual es la fecha limita para implementar el plan?
  - 2.1. ¿Cuándo comenzaron a implementar el plan? ¿De que manera trabajaron juntos los miembros del equipo para implementar el plan? ¿Son los mismos procesos o tecnicas de trabajo en equipo que utilizaron para cumplir con las tareas durante el curso? Ahora siguen trabajandolo? ¿Todos los miembros del equipo? ¿Cómo mantuvo el enfoque una vez que el curso terminó? ¿Qué hicieron para motivar la participación de los distintos miembros del equipo despues del curso?
  - 2.2. ¿Ya realizaron de las actividades en el plan? ¿Todas? ¿Tambien realizaron otras actividades que no aparecieron en el plan? ¿Que sistema utilizan para monitorear los avances del plan?
  - 2.3. ¿Cuáles son los resultados (gruesos) hasta la fecha, según indicadores u otro tipo de evidencia? ¿En alguna manera contribuyen estos resultados a las metas institucionales?
  - 2.4. Que es lo que les motivó a ustedes a implementarlo y a lograr los resultados? Encontraron algunos obstaculos en el proceso de implementación? Como resolvieron dichos obstaculos? Tienen la intención de seguir implementandolo?

- 2.5. ¿Han seleccionado otro reto institucional para enfrentar? ¿De que manera estan enfrentandolo? ¿Quienes miembros del equipo original estan todavias involucrados?
- 2.6. ¿Ha hecho usted o su equipo algún esfuerzo explícito por investigar y mejorar el clima de trabajo de su equipo? ¿Como y cuando? ¿Cuál es su experiencia con el clima de su equipo?
3. ¿Su equipo participó en el periodo de seguimiento ofrecido por Julio Gladson? En que tiempo fue? Porque decidio de participar/no participar?
- 3.1. ¿Que tan util fue el seguimiento? ¿Les ayudo a mejorar su plan de acción o su trabajo en equipo? ¿Como? ¿Les ayudó trabajar en equipo y mantener la participación de los miembros? ¿Como? ¿Alcanzó sus expectativas? ¿Recibió el equipo otro seguimiento sobre el plan de acción de otro lado? ?
- 3.2. El seguimiento para los equipos:
- Cree usted que los equipos quieren recibir algun tipo de seguimiento después de la conclusión del curso? Para que? Para ayudara a mejorar o implementar su plan de acción o para otra necesidad?
  - Seguimiento virtual o en situ/en persona? Si virtual, que tipo de mecanismo (café abierto, discusión facilitada, otro modulo estructurado...?)
  - Con que enfoque: compartir experiencias con otros participante o aprender del facilitador o instructor?
  - Conoce usted el nuevo sitio web que se llama Leadernet? Lo ha entrado en el situ? Porque si/no?

## Annex 3: E-mail Questionnaire

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### **Programa de Gerencia y Liderazgo Evaluación del Programa Virtual de Desarrollo de Liderazgo (VLDP 1 – 2 – 3)**

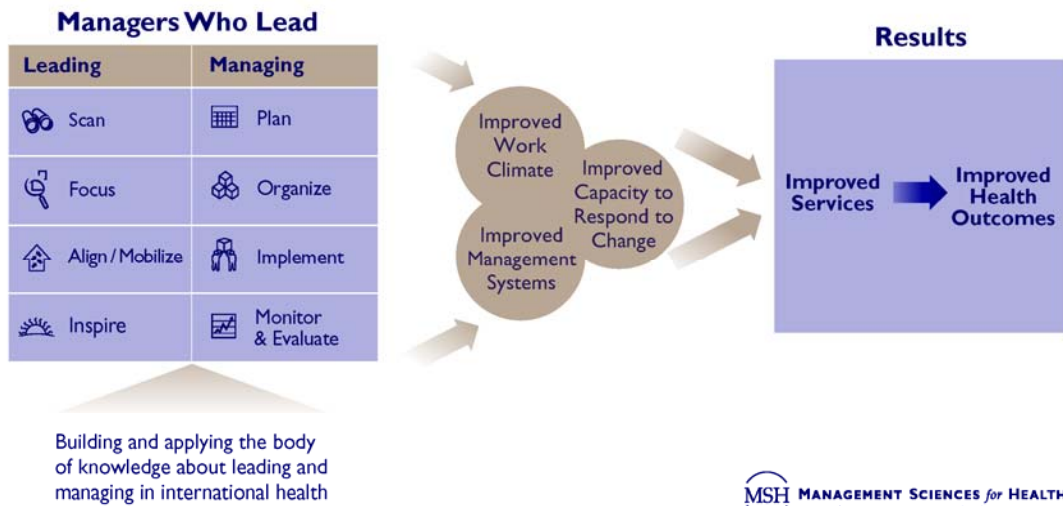
#### Cuestionario Enviado por E-mail

1. ¿Cuando usted participó en el curso de liderazgo, de cuantas personas consistió el equipo en ese tiempo? ¿Las mismas personas siguieron trabajando juntas después del curso? ¿Si no, están trabajando en otros equipos ahora?
2. ¿Ya realizaron las actividades en el plan de acción (adjunto)? ¿Cuáles son los principales resultados que lograron con relación al reto en el plan de acción? ¿Cuál es la evidencia que existe para verificar los resultados?
3. ¿De que manera trabajaron juntos para abordar el reto? ¿Qué hicieron para motivar la participación de los distintos miembros del equipo después del curso?
4. ¿Encontraron algunos obstáculos en el proceso de enfrentar el reto? ¿Como resolvieron dichos obstáculos?
5. ¿Han seleccionado otro reto institucional para enfrentarlo? ¿Cuál es? ¿De que manera están enfrentándolo – cuales procesos están utilizando? ¿Cuántos miembros del equipo original están todavía involucrados?

## Annex 4: M&L Results Framework

### Leading & Managing Results Model

How do management and leadership contribute to improved service delivery?





## Annex 5: Workgroup Climate Assessment Questions

1. We are recognized for individual contributions.
2. We have a common purpose.
3. We have the resources we need to do our jobs well.
4. We are developing our skills and knowledge.
5. We have a plan that guides our activities.
6. We strive to improve our performance.
7. We understand each other's capabilities.
8. We are clear about what is expected in our work.
9. We seek to understand the needs of our clients.
10. We participate in the decisions of our work group.
11. We take pride in our work.
12. We readily adapt to new circumstances.